

Message Text

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S/S O :JETHYDEN
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TO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 160096

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, YO, US

SUBJECT: VEST-BELOVSKI MEETING: MIHAJLOVIC STATUE

REFS: A) STATE 158451, B) BELGRADE 4476

1. AMONG OTHER TOPICS RAISED BY VEST IN HIS MEETING WITH BELOVSKI (REF A) WAS THE SENATE PASSAGE OF THE MIHAJLOVIC STATUE BILL. REFERRING TO THIS "PECULIAR" MATTER, VEST SAID HE WAS NOT SURE THERE WAS FULL UNDERSTANDING ABOUT THE QUESTION IN BELGRADE AND WANTED TO PROVIDE AN AUTHORITATIVE EXPLANATION. VEST STRESSED THAT THE SENATE ACTION WAS THE RESULT OF AN "UTTERLY SPONTANEOUS" EFFORT ON THE PART OF A FEW SENATORS. THE DEPARTMENT HAD KNOWN NOTHING ABOUT THIS, NOR HAD IT BEEN CONSULTED. THE DE-
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PARTMENT WOULD HAVE OPPOSED THIS ACTION, BUT IT HAD BEEN SPRUNG AS A COMPLETE SURPRISE. VEST WENT ON TO SAY THAT WE HAVE SINCE TALKED TO CHAIRMAN ZABLOCKI WHO UNDERSTANDS OUR OPPOSITION TO THE MIHAJLOVIC STATUE AND HAS EXPRESSED HIS COMMITTEE'S INTENTION TO TAKE NO ACTION ON IT. CONSEQUENTLY, WE ASSUME THE BILL WILL DIE IN THE HOUSE.

2. CONCLUDING, VEST ASKED BELOVSKI TO CONVEY THESE REMARKS TO HIS GOVERNMENT. HE URGED BELOVSKI OR MINISTER

PETKOVIC TO COME TO US IF THEY HAVE ANY FURTHER QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS MATTER.

3. BELOVSKI RESPONDED THAT THERE IS NO MISUNDERSTANDING ON HIS PART OR IN THE GOY ABOUT THE DEPARTMENT'S ATTITUDE TOWARD THE MIHAJLOVIC STATUE. HE ADDED THAT MR. PETKOVIC'S INTERVENTION WAS DESIGNED ONLY TO ENGAGE THE INTENTION OF THE DEPARTMENT AND TO INSURE ITS UNDERSTANDING OF THE POTENTIAL IMPACT THE MIHAJLOVIC STATUE ISSUE WOULD HAVE ON OUR RELATIONS. BELOVSKI SAID HE HAD ALREADY INFORMED THE GOY THAT THE DEPARTMENT AND THE ADMINISTRATION DO NOT FAVOR POSITIVE ACTION ON THE BILL. VEST CONCLUDED BY REASSURING BELOVSKI THAT THIS MATTER IS NOT BEING TAKEN FOR GRANTED BY THE ADMINISTRATION AND REITERATED THAT THE RECENT SENATE ACTION HAD BEEN A SPONTANEOUS EFFORT BY A FEW SENATORS.

4. COMMENT: MINISTER PETKOVIC, WHO HAS RECENTLY RETURNED FROM CONSULTATIONS IN BELGRADE, TOLD AN NSC OFFICIAL THAT TITO IS "FURIOUS" OVER THE SENATE ACTION AND HAD TERMED IT "AN EXAMPLE OF AMERICAN DUPLICITY". PETKOVIC SAID HE HAD HEARD THIS FROM FOREIGN SECRETARY
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MINIC WHO HAD PERSONALLY WITNESSED TITO'S REACTION. VANCE

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